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California State Sheriffs' Association

Organization Founded by the Sheriffs in 1894

March 22, 2013

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554
WC Docket No. 12-375

**Re: Federal Communications Commission 47 CFR Part 64
[WC Docket No. 12-375; FCC 12-167]
Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services**

Dear Federal Communications Commission:

On behalf of the California State Sheriffs' Association (CSSA), I write to express our opposition and concerns regarding the WC Docket No. 12-375 Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding rates for inmate calling services. Regulation of inmate telephone service systems by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) would seriously hamper the ability of California Sheriffs to effectively secure and manage their jails.

Federal legislation on this same issue has been brought forward in the past, which CSSA has also opposed. Although well-intentioned, the effects of imposing regulations on inmate phone services will be more harmful than beneficial to the very individuals it seeks to assist. We are aware that there has been much attention to the fact that inmates and their families are often required to pay more than prevailing market rates for phone calls in order to stay in touch. That criticism is heightened when the rates involve commissions paid back to the jails or prisons housing the inmates.

However, in California, the law requires any revenue received from inmate telephone contracts to be deposited in an Inmate Welfare Fund, which in turn, funds programs and services that directly benefit the inmates. Inmate Welfare Funds pay for educational and vocational programs, law libraries, recreation supplies, and other services that benefit indigent inmates, such as transportation vouchers for inmates being released from custody.

The Sheriffs of California are providing vital programs for offenders in their facilities, programs that are often funded by inmate welfare funds. Regulation would compromise the funding for these important services and reverse the advances made in offender outcomes.

The phone rates are designed to provide a funding source to assist all inmates with various re-entry programs. In essence, the inmates who use the phones are making a minor

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contribution to their own rehabilitative programs. Given that many incarcerated individuals do not pay local or state taxes, nor do they pay for the costs associated with their incarceration, this is one of their only opportunities to directly contribute to the programs designed to assist them. Setting a rate structure would be detrimental to every department's inmate welfare fund which would directly impact inmate programming.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KR', followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Keith Royal, CSSA President
Sheriff, Nevada County

KR/cmc

cc: All California Sheriffs
Carmen Green, CSSA Deputy Executive Director
Nick Warner, CSSA Legislative Director
Martin Mayer, CSSA General Counsel